

Message Text

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PAGE 01 THE HA 02135 291712Z

70

ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-06 IO-03 COME-00 TRSE-00

SAJ-01 EB-03 OMB-01 MC-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 DODE-00 L-02 H-01 NSC-07 NSCE-00 PM-03 PRS-01

SP-01 DRC-01 /068 W

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R 291609Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3458

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BURUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

CINCUSAFE

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2135

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BEXP, BE, NL, NO, DA

SUBJ: F-104 AIRCRAFT REPLACEMENT: TALK WITH STATE SECRETARY FOR
DEFENSE STEMERDINK

REF: THE HAGUE 2065

SUMMARY: CHARGE SAW STATE SECRETARY FOR DEFENSE STEMERDINK APRIL
29 TO DISCUSS STATUS OF NETHERLANDS DEFENSE WHITE PAPER AND TO
SUPPORT PROPOSED VISIT TO US BY TEAM OF SENIOR TECHNICAL EXPERTS

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PAGE 02 THE HA 02135 291712Z

TO FACILITATE JOINT SELECTION OF US REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT BY FOUR
COUNTRIES CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

1. CHARGE CALLED ON STATE SECRETARY STEMERDINK MORNING OF APRIL 29 TO TALK ABOUT STATUS OF NETHERLANDS DEFENSE WHITE PAPER AND REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR THE F-104S. STEMERDINK VOLUNTEERED THAT HE HAD ATTENDED A MEETING WITH LEFT-WING POLITICIANS UNDER PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL'S CHAIRMANSHIP WHICH HAD ENDED AT 3 THAT MORNING. PURPOSE WAS APPARENTLY TO SECURE APPROVAL OF LEFT-WING OF LABOR PARTY AND OTHER RADICAL ELEMENTS FOR MAIN THRUST OF WHITE PAPER. STEMERDINK INDICATED SATISFACTION WITH RESULTS OF THIS UNUSUAL MEETING. HE SAID THAT CABINET WOULD CONSIDER WHITE PAPER AT EVENING MEETING APRIL 29 AND THAT PERHAPS ANOTHER MEETING WOULD BE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN APPROVAL AT THAT LEVEL BEFORE GON SUBMITTED WHITE PAPER FOR NATO REVIEW. STEMERDINK ADDED THAT IT WAS ALMOST CERTAIN AS OF NOW THAT THE WHITE PAPER, IF APPROVED, WOULD INCORPORATE DECISION TO REPLACE THE STARFIGHTERS.

2. CHARGE REFERRED TO RECENT DE TELEGRAAF STORY (THE HAGUE 2109) AND SAID THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE IN THAT IT COULD ENCOURAGE THE SOVIETS TO PLAY A WAITING GAME AT THE MBFR TALKS. STEMERDINK AGREED THAT NATO ALLIES SHOULD NOT RPT NOT REDUCE THEIR CONVENTIONAL FORCES SIGNIFICANTLY ON A UNILATERAL BASIS. HE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT FACED WITH SEVERE BUDGETARY STRINGENCIES GON, IN ITS WHITE PAPER, HAD OPTED FOR QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT OVER THE MAINTAINANCE OF THE QUANTITY OF FORCES. HE DEFENDED THIS WITH THE SAME RATIONALE USED IN THE ENCLOSURE TO AMBASSADOR HARTOGH'S APRIL 19 LETTER TO AMBASSADOR RUMSFELD (USNATO 2142). STEMERDINK STRESSED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHITE PAPER WOULD GIVE ALL THREE BRANCHES OF THE NETHERLANDS ARMED FORCES MODERN AND EFFECTIVE EQUIPMENT IN A FEW YEARS' TIME.

3. TURNING TO THE SELECTION OF A REPLACEMENT FIGHTER, STEMERDINK REFLECTED THE SAME STRONG PREFERENCE FOR AN AMERICAN AIRCRAFT HE HAS ALWAYS EXPRESSED BUT INDICATED CLEARLY FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT THE COBRA WAS THE BEST PLANE FOR THE NETHERLANDS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MINISTER OF DEFENSE VREDELING CONTINUED TO BE ATTRACTED BY THE MIRAGE BECAUSE IT WAS A "EUROPEAN AIRPLANE." STEMERDINK SAID THAT THIS ARGUMENT, WHATEVER ITS VALIDITY, WAS MORE THAN OFFSET BY FRANCE'S FOREIGN POLICY. HE SAID THAT HE HAD TOLD THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO HIS FACE THAT HE DISAPPROVED OF FRENCH POLICY. WHEN
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PAGE 03 THE HA 02135 291712Z

THE CHARGE ASKED WHAT REACTION THIS PRODUCED, STEMERDINK SAID THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED UNHAPPINESS. STEMERDINK INDICATED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD NOT LET IT GO AT THAT BUT HAD IN EFFECT COMPLAINED TO FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL, WHICH HAD RESULTED IN THE LATTER CHASTING STEMERDINK FOR HIS REMARKS. STEMERDINK CLARIFIED THAT VAN DER STOEL DID NOT NECESSARILY DISAGREE WITH STEMERDINK'S ANTIPATHY TOWARD FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY BUT HE FAULTED HIS JUNIOR CABINET COLLEAGUE FOR GIVING OFFENSE DIRECTLY TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR (PLEASE PROTECT STEMERDINK AS SOURCE OF THIS INCIDENT).

4. AFTER THE CHARGE HAD REVIEWED THE RECENT EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN AMBASSADOR GOULD AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE VREDELING (REFTEL) AND DEVELOPMENTS IN BELGIUM AND ELSEWHERE, STEMERDINK EXPRESSED STRONG SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED VISIT TO THE US OF TEAM OF SENIOR TECHNICAL EXPERTS FROM THE NETHERLANDS AND OTHER THREE COUNTRIES CONCERNED. STEMERDINK THOUGHT THIS COULD INDEED BE USEFUL IN PERSUADING THE BELGIANS TO BUY AN AMERICAN PLANE. HOWEVER, HE DID NOT INDICATE THAT A BELGIAN DECISION TO BUY FRENCH WOULD UNDULY INFLUENCE THE ULTIMATE GON DECISION, WHICH HE THOUGHT WOULD COME NEXT SEPTEMBER.

5. COMMENT: STEMERDINK REMAINS ONE OF THE STRONGEST ASSETS WE HAVE IN THE GON IN FAVOR OF AN AMERICAN REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT. AS HE FRANKLY INDICATED, HE WILL NOT HAVE THE FINAL SAY BUT HIS VIEWS WILL BE INFLUENTIAL, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF HIS TIES WITH THE YOUNGER, MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS OF THE LABOR PARTY.
TANGUY

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